Economic Analysis

An economic analysis has documented some of the many benefits gained from the Texas Oak Wilt Suppression Project for the period 1988 through 1997.

The total investment of $7.5 million of Project funds (cost shares plus operational expenses) has saved central Texas communities an estimated **$45 million in tree removal, replanting, and fungicide injections alone** by halting the spread of oak wilt centers. The dollar value of the many oak trees saved in rural and urban areas by cooperative suppression and public awareness efforts is immeasurable.

Coordination with Other Programs

The Texas Forest Service field foresters in central Texas who deliver the Oak Wilt Suppression Project also are involved in various other state and federal forestry programs. These include urban forestry, stewardship, insect and disease management, and fire prevention and control. This integration of multiple federal and state forestry programs is unique and works to the benefit of central Texas clientele.

In addition to providing technical assistance on oak wilt, TFS foresters can provide the same landowners with recommendations on tree maintenance and protection. Qualified landowners also may receive cost shares for tree planting and other stewardship practices.

Partnerships

The following agencies or support groups are involved with the Texas Oak Wilt Suppression Project:

- Texas Forest Service
- USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection
- Texas Agricultural Extension Service
- Texas Agricultural Experiment Station
- Texas Historical Commission
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Lower Colorado River Authority
- City of Austin
- Travis County
- Other City and County Governments
- Neighborhood Associations
- Private Landowners

More Information

For more information on oak wilt or the Texas Oak Wilt Suppression Project, contact your nearest Texas Forest Service office or :

Texas Forest Service
P.O. Box 15083
Austin, Texas 78761-5083
Phone: (512) 371-7011
e-mail: tfsaus@swbell.net

The Problem

Live oaks, the most common and prized trees throughout central Texas, are dying in large numbers. A native fungal disease known as **oak wilt** is killing rural and urban oak trees from Dallas to San Antonio.

The Response

To address the oak wilt problem in Texas (first discovered in Dallas in 1961), the Texas Forest Service initiated the **Cooperative Oak Wilt Suppression Project** in 1988. Funding to date has been provided primarily by the USDA Forest Service/Forest Health Protection and the Texas Forest Service.

Objectives

The primary goal of the Suppression Project is to reduce potential losses of trees to oak wilt in rural and urban landscapes in central Texas through a coordinated program of public awareness, technical assistance, and treatment cost shares.

Public Awareness

Trained specialists with the Texas Forest Service, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, City of Austin, and other cooperating agencies have educated thousands of central Texas landowners abou oak wilt.

Many different approaches are being used to inform the public on how to recognize and cope with oak wilt. These include news articles, circulars, landowner workshops and tours, neighborhood meetings, on-site visits, photo displays, television coverage, and Internet web pages.

In cooperation with the Lower Colorado River Authority, an **oak wilt informational line (512-473-3517)** has been established to answer the most commonly-asked questions about oak wilt.

Suppression Accomplishments

Aerial detection surveys have been conducted over most of central Texas to document the abundance and distribution of oak wilt centers. To date, **oak wilt has been identified from 55 counties in central Texas and six counties in west Texas** (see map on inside page). Infection levels are most severe in the counties located along the Interstate-35 corridor, from Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio.

Working in partnership with private landowners, neighborhood associations, cities, and state and federal agencies, the Texas Forest Service has implemented more than **$3 million in cost-shared control treatments** since the project began. Half the costs were covered by federal funds.

In live oaks, the disease may spread through interconnected root systems at rates up to 100 feet per year in urban and rural sites. To halt this tree-to-tree spread, more than **2 million feet (400+ miles) of barrier trenches** have been installed in 34 affected counties. On average, 70% of the trenches installed since 1990 have successfully halted oak wilt spread, with no need for retreatment.

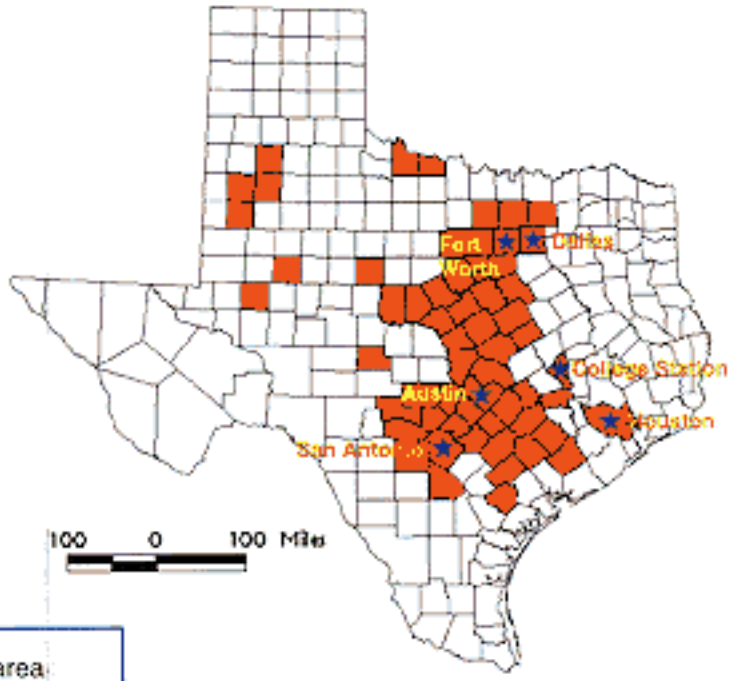
With Project assistance, over **7,000 live oaks have been injected** with the fungicide Alamo®. In addition, **several hundred infected red oaks have been eliminated annually** to reduce long distance spread of the disease by insects carrying oak wilt spores.

Long-term Strategy

To assure a healthy forest in central Texas for future generations, the long-term strategy for management of oak wilt calls for:

- Promoting more diversified rural and urban forests of live oaks intermixed with other native trees, and
- Educating Texans about oak wilt, its identification, prevention and control.

Oak Wilt in Texas



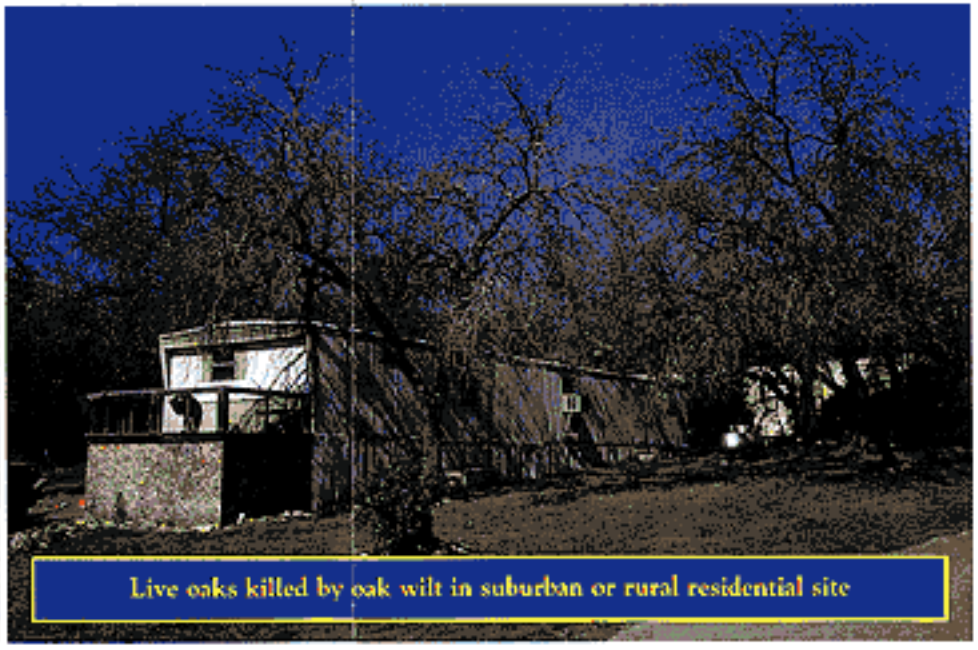
Texas counties with oak wilt

The counties in Texas with oak wilt cover an area larger than Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Maryland combined.

Photos courtesy of Ron Billings, Texas Forest Service

Impact of oak wilt in rural site

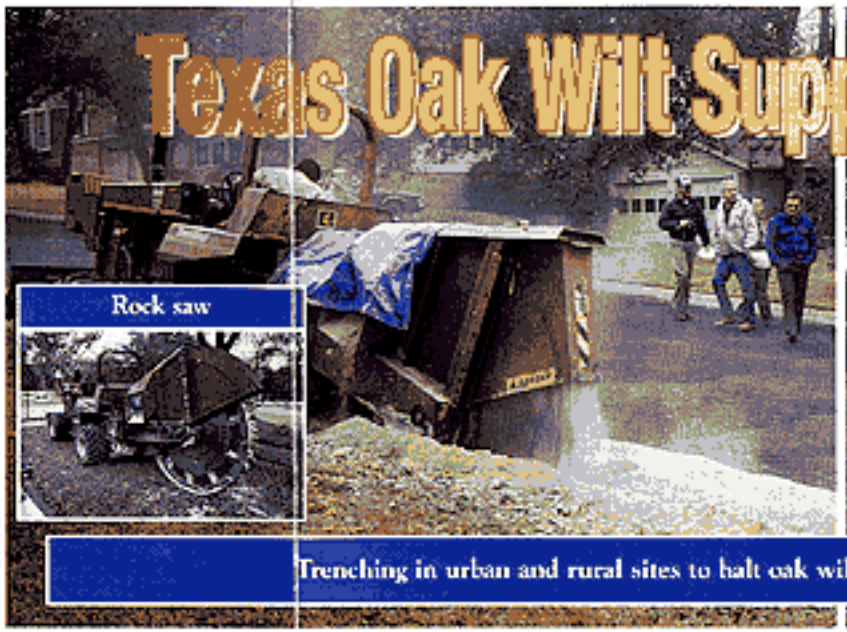
Victims of oak wilt in urban site

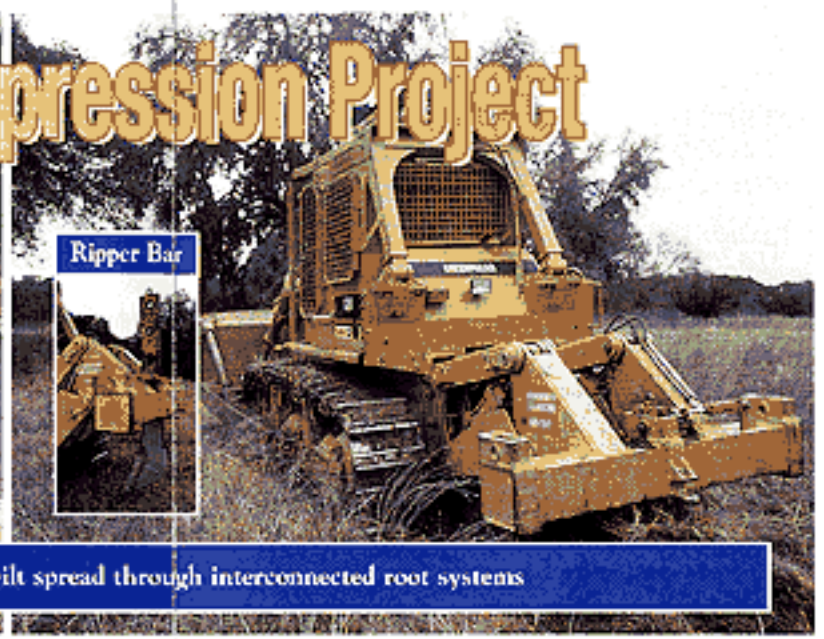


Live oaks killed by oak wilt in suburban or rural residential site

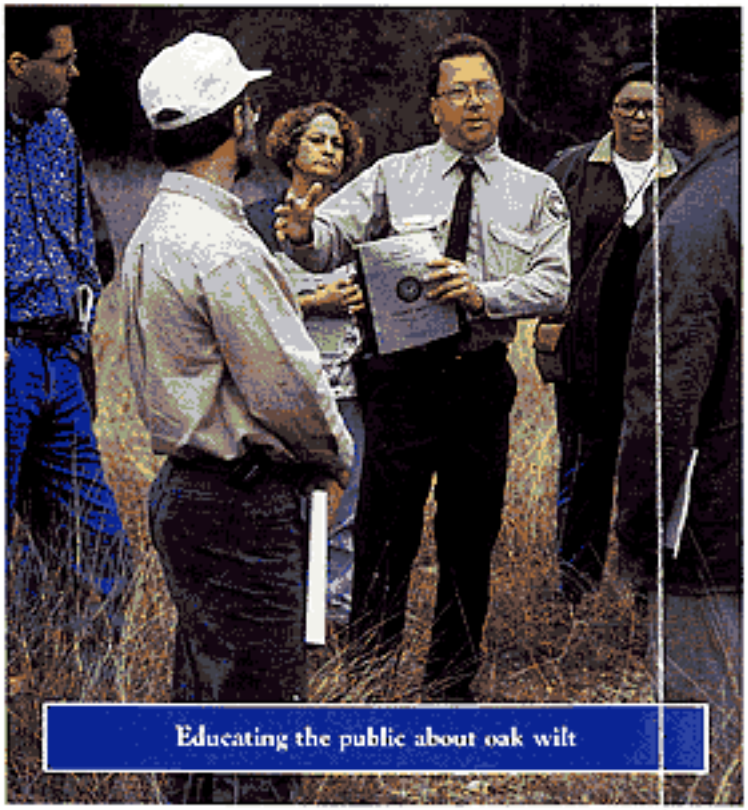
Texas Oak Wilt Suppression Project

Identifying oak wilt

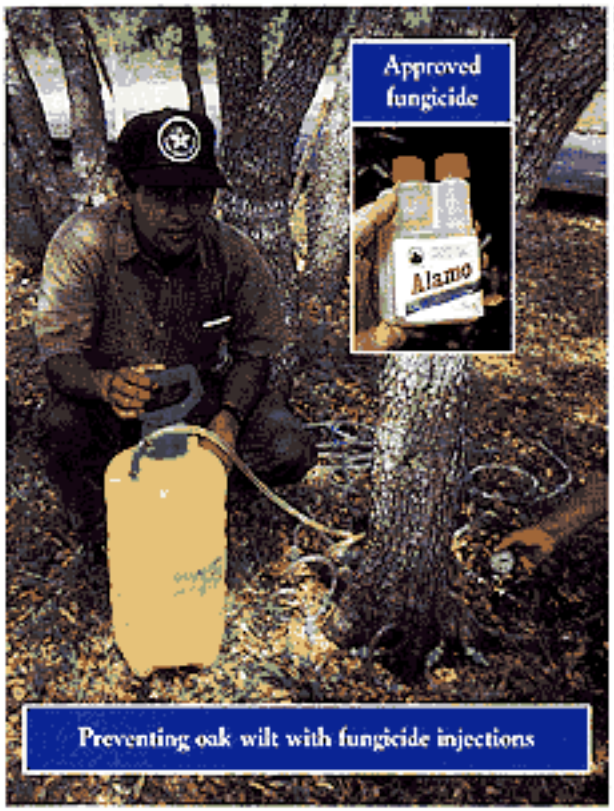




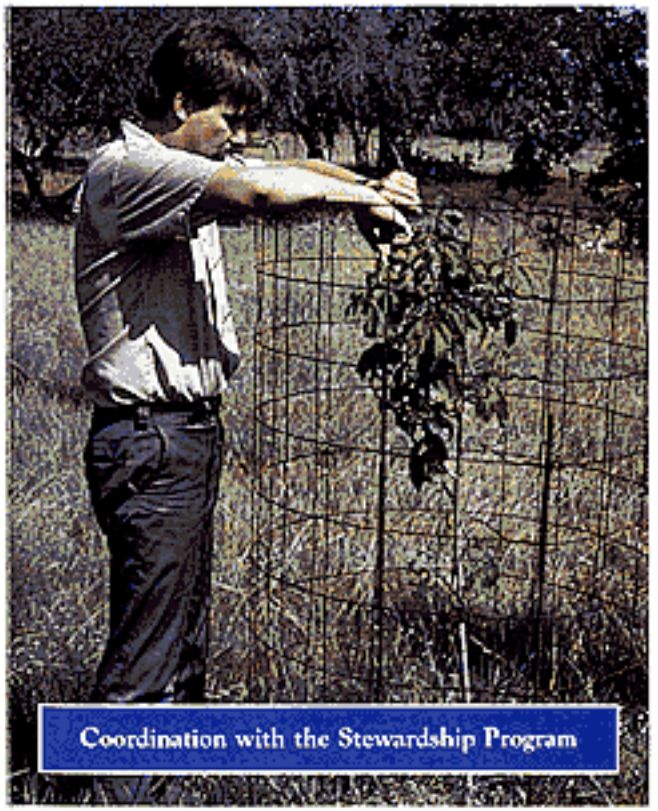
Trenching in urban and rural sites to halt oak wilt spread through interconnected root systems



Educating the public about oak wilt



Preventing oak wilt with fungicide injections



Coordination with the Stewardship Program